



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

White Sands
National Monument

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White Sands News Release

For Immediate Release

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Date: June 15, 2011

Woman Dies While Hiking in White Sands National Monument

Alamogordo, N.M. – A 23-year old woman from Sheldon, Iowa, died today while hiking the Alkali Flat Trail in White Sands National Monument.

Erica Hoekstra was hiking this afternoon with a friend when she began experiencing symptoms of distress. Erica's friend quickly hiked back to the trailhead to retrieve additional water and ice from their car and called 911 at approximately 1:00 pm from her cell phone. When the friend returned to the scene, Erica was unconscious. She began CPR. Upon receiving the 911 call, National Park Service rangers responded immediately, hiking approximately one-half mile to her location on the trail and continued CPR. Paramedics from Alamo West Volunteer Fire Department also responded and provided assistance.

The Alkali Flat Trail is a five-mile loop trail traversing the dunes of White Sands National Monument. Hikers should be prepared for extreme temperatures and bring at least one gallon of water per person, sunglasses, sunscreen, and high energy snacks.

National Park Service rangers are investigating the incident. The cause of death is being investigated by the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator.

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